



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

the same events continually recur. Nevertheless, Dr. Ingram has studied the printed sources and even some manuscript sources, and occasionally his points are well-made. In minor matters he furnishes corrections to Lecky ; he is justified in laying stress upon the political side of the penal laws, and upon the fact that the Catholics in a measure provoked the passage of such laws ; it is true, too, that the Irish woolen industry was of little moment when it was suppressed by the English in 1699 ; that the Irish Parliament was venal and corrupt, and that the estates of absentees should have been taxed ; but even when right it is inevitable that he should not receive the credit of being so, since the reader is rendered suspicious by the violence of his tone, his evident bias, and his indiscriminate abuse of his opponents.

RALPH C. H. CATTERALL.

*La Noblesse Française sous Richelieu.* Par le Vicomte G. d'AVENEL.  
(Paris : Armand Colin. 1901. Pp. 355.)

THE matter in this book is not new. In his elaborate and valuable work *Richelieu et la Monarchie Absolue*, published twenty years ago, the Vicomte G. d'Avenel treated of the condition of the nobility when Richelieu ruled over France. What was there said formed a part of three large volumes. The author has now printed by itself the portion which relates to the nobility, in one moderate-sized volume.

For the most part, the matter contained in the former work is re-printed word for word. Some additions have been made, of no great importance, and some slight changes made in the text. We notice that in giving the relative values of money, the author formerly estimated that a livre in the days of Richelieu had a purchasing power equal to six francs in our times. He now gives the equivalent value as five-fold. Such a multiplicity of circumstances have to be considered in estimating the relative values of money at different epochs, that at best one can only make a rough guess.

It was probably judicious to select the portion of the former work which treated of the nobility, that it might be presented in more convenient shape to the reading public. For the majority of readers, the French nobility is the most interesting of the institutions of the old régime. Certainly it was the most picturesque, though it was far from being the most useful. The Vicomte d'Avenel thinks that the forms of freer government still existed when Richelieu assumed power and should have been utilized by him, yet he finds little fault with the Cardinal's treatment of the French nobles. Indeed, his judgment upon the body of which he is a member has become more unfavorable, after twenty years of reflection. In 1881 he wrote : "History has been severe toward the nobility, sometimes even unjust." In the present volume he contents himself with saying that "History has been severe," without suggesting that it has been unjust. No follower of the Cardinal could have defended his policy toward the French nobility with more vigor than our

author. "The decline of the nobility," he says, "ought not to be imputed solely to Richelieu. If the nobility fell, it was not from any particular cause, or by the act of any particular man, it fell because it was unfit to govern. . . . The privileges which it retained for services rendered by its ancestors, were the interest on a debt which had become onerous to the community and which ought to have been cancelled."

In an age when individual valor was becoming of less value in the battlefield, and familiarity with political questions was more required at the council table, the importance of the French nobleman steadily diminished. As our author says: "He gave little attention to his private affairs, and still less to public affairs. He was neither artistic nor scholarly. He disdained agriculture, he despised commerce." He was indeed a curious contrast to the English nobleman, who divided his time between an active interest in political questions, and a thrifty care of his own finances. It is not strange that the privileges which the French nobility retained, became irritating to the community. The condition of public feeling in the time of Richelieu was far removed from that in the days preceding the Revolution, yet even the nobility as a body had no popular hold. And for this reason it was easy for Richelieu to diminish the uncertain and precarious power which the nobles still possessed; by their own fault they had ceased to be an important factor in the state, and their intermittent turbulence was checked by the Cardinal.

Picturesque, the French nobility certainly was, but it was frivolous to an unusual extent. The details of dress, the details of extravagance, the details of folly, fill many pages of this book. As a class, the nobility were strangely devoid of true ambition. Of unimportant privileges and dignities, they were indeed most tenacious. The chronicles of the times are filled with quarrels over questions of etiquette. The right to walk first in the procession, the right to receive first the incense from the priest, were held with tenacity. But real power slipped from their listless grasp. They were indifferent as to their political rights, because they were absorbed in the pursuits of vanity and pleasure. "The French nobility," says our author, "was condemned to die from inanition and sterile pride." Such is the epitaph which history places upon a body, which might have played in the development of modern France as great a part as the English nobility took in the growth of the English constitution.

There are a few criticisms to be passed upon M. d'Avenel's work. His position as an authority on French history has been for many years established. The present work is not new, but it serves to draw attention once more to one of the most interesting elements in the French nation, at a period when, under the influence of an extraordinary man, the French monarchy was undergoing great and permanent changes.

JAMES BRECK PERKINS.